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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001921

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SUBJECT: OYO IMPEACHMENT SPARKS VIOLENCE IN ASSEMBLY

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reason 1.4 (D)

SUMMARY

1. (U) December normally experiences a decline in political activity and caviling in Nigeria. However, this December is an exception and is perhaps a sign of what is to come in 2006. If so, Nigeria may be in for a rough ride at the state as well as the national level. The Oyo State House of Assembly has ruptured in two factions, and violence erupted between the groups of lawmakers over the proposed impeachment of controversial Governor Ladoja. One group is loyal to Ladoja while another is loyal to his estranged political godfather, Lamidi Adedibu. The impeachment crisis is the latest skirmish in the protracted battle between Ladoja and Adedibu. Despite previous mediation by President Obasanjo and other Yoruba figures, this spate shows only signs of intensifying not abating. It will also be a sad precedent that may be copied in several other southern states. End summary.

LADOJA - ADEDIBU FEUD IGNITES IMPEACHMENT ATTEMPT

2. (U) Violence erupted at the Oyo State House of Assembly on December 13 after eighteen members of the thirty-two member body moved to impeach Governor Rashidi Ladoja. The eighteen are allies of Lamidi Adedibu, the senescent dean of Oyo politics and former mentor of Ladoja. After Ladoja became comfortable in his current position, he began to display an independence that insulted Adedibu. The two are now bitter foes. With word spreading that something serious was afoot, armed loyalists of the two rival groups went to the Assembly Building that morning; sporadic, and fortunately ineffectual, gunfire ensued. In the melee, two pro-Ladoja members were allegedly stabbed by a pro-Adedibu colleague.

3. (C) The eighteen Adedibu supporters left the Assembly building under heavy guard, later reconvening at a local hotel, where they passed a motion to impeach the Governor. Led by Deputy Speaker Taiwo Olayemi, the group also suspended Speaker Adeolu Adeleke and five other members indefinitely. (Comment: These Oyo State Assembly members appear to be borrowing a page from their Bayelsa State counterparts. To guarantee the impeachment of Governor Alamieyeseigha, the Bayelsa lawmakers suspended four members of their Assembly who were loyal to the Governor. By suspending the six members, the pro-Adedibu faction could argue the membership of the House had been effectively reduced from thirty-two to twenty-six. Thus, the eighteen members favoring impeachment would now meet the two-thirds threshold required. End comment.)

4. (U) Not to be outdone, the thirteen members loyal to the Governor, led by Speaker Adeleke, met separately in the House and suspended Deputy Speaker Olayemi and three other members leading the impeachment caper.

WAR OF WORDS IN THE PRESS

5. (U) The confusion continued into December 14 with both factions issuing statements discounting the other. The pro-Ladoja thirteen passed a vote of confidence in the Governor and instructed the Governor to ignore the impeachment action. Adeleke stated that the eighteen members had illegally met outside the Assembly complex. Meanwhile, the eighteen pro-impeachment members issued a rebuttal alleging thirteen members did constitute a quorum and their actions were null and void.

COMMENT

6. (C) This episode is the latest flare-up in a

long-standing political feud between Ladoja and Adedibu over control of the PDP machinery in Oyo State. To a certain degree, it is also an extension of the struggle between President Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku. While trying to broker peace between the two men, Obasanjo is not seen as completely neutral. He is perceived as closer to Adedibu. Adedibu had successfully leveraged this connection to prevail in the Oyo State PDP registration. Adedibu has vowed to block Ladoja from a second term. Many observers believe Adedibu and his group must have received the green light from Abuja to wield the impeachment bludgeon. First Bayelsa, now Oyo and perhaps Plateau soon. Impeachment may be emerging as a weapon to not only settle local scores but also tip the balances nationally. Do not be surprised if a few more governors are confronted with impeachment in the months to come. How this drama unfolds will be a indicator of how bold Abuja will be in wielding its newly unsheathed impeachment sword to eliminate opposition, particularly since in Oyo there is no smoking gun of money laundering on which to base impeachment charges. End comment.

17. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BROWNE